

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-08 SS-15 SP-02 INT-05
DOE-11 SOE-02 OES-07 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
/073 W

-----115223 241031Z /23

R 231453Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4552
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USDOC WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: EEWT, ENRG, CZ, US
SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN BUSINESSMAN ATTEMPTS TO SELL CSSR COAL TO US

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONTACTED MANY TIMES LATELY BY RUDOLF BRIXNER (ADDRESS: 5110 SCHLOSS WEITWORTH, SALZBURG, AUSTRIA), WHO SAYS HE HAS OPPORTUNITY TO SELL 200,000 TONS OF OSTRAVA COAL TO JONES AND LAUGHLIN STEEL CORP. IN PITTSBURGH. BRIXNER SAYS THAT FTO METALIMEX IS EAGER TO PROVIDE COAL FOR THIS DEAL BUT THAT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE, AND SPECIFICALLY DEP. MIN. JAKUBEC, IS BLOCKING IT BECAUSE OF SOME SORT OF "ANTI-U.S." BIAS. BRIXNER SAYS THAT HE HAS TALKED BY TELEPHONE WITH CZECHOSLOVAK AMBASSADOR JOHANES AND COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR VALENT IN WASHINGTON AND THAT THEY HAVE URGED MFT TO APPROVE DEAL.

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2. E/C COUNSELOR DISCUSSED MATTER JAN. 18 WITH JOSEF KELLER, MFT OFFICE DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR U.S., WHO GIVES DIFFERENT STORY. ACCORDING TO KEELER, CSSR EXPORTS COAL ONLY TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES (E.G. AUSTRIA, FRG) BECAUSE IT WOULD LOSE MONEY SELLING TO DISTANT COUNTRIES LIKE U.S., WHERE IT MUST SELL AT MARKET PRICES THAT WOULD NOT COVER TRANSPORT COSTS PLUS F.O.B. PRICE IT IT COULD OTHERWISE OBTAIN BY SELLING TO NEARER COUNTRIES.

HE ALSO HINTS THAT BRIXNER HAS QUESTIONABLE BUSINESS REPUTATION AND THAT MFT IS WARY OF HIM. KELLER STRONGLY DENIES THAT JAKUBEC OR OTHERS

IN MINISTRY ARE INFLUENCED BY ANY "ANTI-U.S." POLICY OR BIAS IN THIS MATTER.

3. WE THANKED GIST OF KELLER'S REMARKS (MINUS INFERENCE OF COMMERCIAL UNRELIABILITY) TO BRIXNER, WHO REACTED STRONGLY AND ACCUSED KELLER OF LYING. BRIXNER THANKED EMBASSY FOR ITS COOPERATION AND SAID HE WILL PURSUE MATTER FURTHER THROUGH AUSTRIAN COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR IN PRAGUE, WHO HAS PREVIOUSLY ASSISTED HIM.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS NO DESIRE TO GET CAUGHT IN CROSSFIRE BETWEEN BRIXNER AND MFT. WE BELIEVE THAT ECONOMICS AND SUSPICION OF BRIXNER, NOT "ANTI-U.S." POLICY OR BIAS, ARE REASONS MFT IS BLOCKING DEAL.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: SINCE BRIXNER IS QUITE PERSISTENT AND LIKELY TO CONTACT US AGAIN, EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME ANY INFORMATION WHICH ADDEES CAN PROVIDE ON THIS MATTER OR ON BRIXNER HIMSELF.
BYRNE

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